

**TESTIMONY OF ADMIRAL ROBERT J. PAPP, JR.
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“USCG FY 2014 BUDGET”

**BEFORE THE
SENATE OCEANS, ATMOSPHERE, FISHERIES, AND COAST GUARD
(OAF&CG) SUBCOMMITTEE**

April 23, 2013

Chairman Begich, Ranking Member Rubio, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is my honor to appear before you today to testify regarding the Coast Guard’s Fiscal Year 2014 Budget. I’d like to begin by thanking you for the tremendous support you provided in the 2013 Appropriations Act and the Hurricane Sandy recovery emergency supplemental, which enable us to continue to recapitalize an aging fleet, sustain front-line operations, and care for our people.

There were hard-earned gains that I hope to sustain in spite of the uncertain and stormy seas created by the fiscal environment we’re encountering.

Yesterday, Boston and the nation began to pay our final respects to those killed in last week’s senseless violence. The collective hearts of our Coast Guard Family go out to the people of Boston, and all families affected by this tragedy. The Coast Guard is based in that community – and we were able to respond immediately with boats and crews, an armed helicopter, vessel boarding teams and overall enhancement of the maritime transportation security posture. Our ability to respond like this in our ports is a direct result of the support we have received from the Administration and Congress over the past 12 years.

The results of that support were also demonstrated during Hurricane Sandy, when we rescued 14 crewmembers from HMS BOUNTY in 30-foot seas and 60-knot winds eighty miles offshore. We’re also part of the New York/New Jersey community, and in the Port of New York and New Jersey we worked across government and industry to reopen the port to commerce.

Last year, to meet growing demands in the Arctic, we completed Operation Arctic Shield, a 9-month interagency effort including the deployment of a National Security Cutter, two ice capable buoy tenders, and two helicopters 300 miles north

of the Arctic Circle. Given the lack of shore infrastructure and extreme conditions, the capabilities provided by our National Security Cutter were critical.

In executing the DHS layered security strategy, the Coast Guard detected and interdicted threats as far from our shores as possible. Targeting Central American coastal trafficking routes, our cutters and aircraft teamed with interagency aircraft to detect and interdict drug-smuggling vessels carrying 107 metric tons of cocaine – with a street value of nearly \$15 billion, and we disrupted transnational criminal organizations.

Closer to shore, we responded to the growing threat of small go-fast vessels that smugglers are using to avoid the increased security along the southwest U.S. border. Drug smuggling, human trafficking, and other illicit maritime activity – continues to threaten our Nation. Those engaged in this trade are growing smarter and bolder, and they are an increasing danger to our homeland. Transnational criminal organizations in Central America and Mexico are financed by narcotics that arrive by way of the sea, leaving behind a wave of crime and instability in their wake.

In December, we were reminded of the dangers of our duties as I presided at the memorial service for Senior Chief Boatswains Mate Terrell Horne III of Coast Guard Cutter Halibut. He was killed by smugglers when they rammed his Coast Guard pursuit boat near San Diego. Our commitment to the Nation and our duty to honor the memory of Senior Chief Horne strengthens our resolve to defeat these threats.

Unfortunately, much like the weather and the seas we face on a daily basis, the Coast Guard cannot control the fiscal environment in which we operate. We will make best use the resources you provide to safely and effectively conduct operations in the areas of greatest risk to the nation, while recapitalizing our cutters, boats and aircraft to address current and emerging threats, particularly in the offshore environment.

This past year we made great strides in recapitalizing the Coast Guard's aging fleet.

In October we will christen the fourth National Security Cutter, HAMILTON. To date, we have taken delivery of 5 Fast Response Cutters and 14 HC-144 aircraft. We also contracted for the ninth HC-130J, completed a mid-life availability on our

Patrol Boats, and are nearly complete with a mid-life availability on our Medium Endurance Cutters at the Coast Guard Yard.

Despite these successes, we have a long way to go to recapitalize the Coast Guard with the ships, boats and aircraft the Nation needs. The Capital Investment Plan has been delivered to the Congress and should help to inform this discussion.

As the Department of Defense rebalances forces to the Pacific, maritime activity increases in the Arctic, and our nation focuses on Southwest Border security, offshore demand for Coast Guard capabilities and authorities is increasing. Our 378-ft High Endurance Cutters have ably served offshore for 50 years, but as I have testified before, they are at the end of their service lives. I am very happy to report that I received strong support from the Secretary and the President on my absolute highest acquisition priorities, including funding for the 7th National Security Cutter in the FY2014 budget.

The FY 2014 budget sustains the most critical front-line operations while funding our most critical acquisition projects. In the current fiscal environment, this required tough decisions informed by my highest priorities. These were difficult decisions for me and for our Service – but they were the best decisions to ensure we provide the next generation of Coast Guardsmen the tools required to protect our nation.

As I look back on our successes of the past year, I have never been more convinced about the value your Coast Guard provides to the Nation. I have never been prouder of our Coast Guard men and women. They have never been better and I want to preserve our hard-earned gains.

While realistic and mindful of the current fiscal environment, I remain optimistic about the future of the Coast Guard. It is my duty to look beyond the annual budget cycle to prepare and adapt the Service, and keep it moving forward to address the greatest maritime safety and security risks to the nation now *and* in the future. The men and women of the Coast Guard give their all and make sacrifices every day, putting their country first. We owe them our very best efforts to provide the support they need.

This Subcommittee has long supported the men and women of the Coast Guard, recognizing their sacrifice, and on behalf of my Coast Guard Shipmates, I thank you.